



## *NEWS RELEASE*

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

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AUGUST 13, 2008

### **LEADER OF CRACK COCAINE CONSPIRACY PLEADS GUILTY, FACES MANDATORY 20 YEARS IN PRISON**

Acting United States Attorney Julia C. Dudley announced today that the main target of a year-and-a-half long cocaine and crack cocaine trafficking investigation by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, Derrick Lamont Evans, a.k.a "Shank," age 34, of Gray, Tennessee, entered a plea of guilty today in the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia in Abingdon.

Evans pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute and possess with the intent to distribute 50 grams or more of cocaine base in front of Chief United States District Court Judge James P. Jones. Evans and 50 co-defendants were indicted on May 28, 2008, in a twelve count indictment alleging multiple violations of the federal narcotics and gun laws that occurred between January 2003 and April 30, 2008.

"Today's guilty plea is the culmination of a lengthy and very complex investigation that led to the indictment of over 50 individuals accused of dealing significant amounts of crack cocaine throughout a multi-state area," Acting United States Attorney Julia C. Dudley said today. "The United States Attorney's Office is hopeful that Mr. Evans' admission of guilt will be the first of many by defendants involved in this case."

According to court documents and evidence presented at today's guilty plea hearing by Assistant United States Attorney Zachary Lee, in January 2007 law enforcement agents from multiple agencies began targeting a large scale crack cocaine distribution organization operating in Southwest Virginia, Northeast Tennessee, and North Carolina.

The drug-trafficking organization had been operating in the region for several years and was organized by the members of *KANTSTOP RECORDS, Inc.*, a music production company based out of Burlington, North Carolina. Ultimately, the drug trafficking organization consisted of at least 51 people in Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina, who were actively involved in the distribution of crack cocaine.

According to evidence discovered through the course of the investigation, *KANTSTOP RECORDS, Inc.*, was a music production company incorporated in the state of Tennessee in

2003 by Evans and Bryant Kelly Pride, a.k.a. "Pride," age 36, of Bristol, Virginia.

Evans was listed as the President and Pride was listed as the Executive Vice President/Chief Executive Officer of *KANTSTOP RECORDS, Inc.*, which sponsored the musicians Marcus Andrew Watkins a.k.a "Sparkz," age 30, Andre Lamont Watkins a.k.a. "Huff da Author," age 30, and Tyree Lamar Slade a.k.a. "Ovious Mcfly," age 26, all of Burlington, North Carolina, who made up the music group "Fam 1st."

Charles Jermaine King, age 31, also of Burlington, NC, was also sponsored by *KANTSTOP RECORDS, Inc.*, and performed under the name "Zig-Lah." Based upon the investigation, it became clear to law enforcement that the individuals associated with *KANTSTOP RECORDS* had been distributing crack cocaine in the Bristol region since at least 2003, and consistently recruited friends and associates from the Burlington, North Carolina area to transport and distribute large quantities of crack cocaine into a geographic region that ranged from Sullivan County, Tennessee north to Washington County and Russell County, Virginia. In addition, many individuals from Virginia and Tennessee were recruited by Pride, Evans, and others associated with *KANTSTOP RECORDS, Inc.*, to be street-level dealers of crack cocaine, drivers to transport crack cocaine into the area, and to provide houses from which powder cocaine could be transformed into crack cocaine and from which crack cocaine could be stored and sold.

Throughout the course of the investigation more than \$25,000 in United States currency, numerous vehicles, firearms and multiple ounces of cocaine and crack cocaine were seized by law enforcement agents.

Evans faces a potential maximum sentence of life imprisonment and/or a fine of up to \$8,000,000.00. He also faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 20 imprisonment based upon a sentencing enhancement filed by the United States Attorney's Office.

The investigation of this case was conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, Bristol, the Tennessee Police Department, the Bristol, Virginia Police Department, the Sullivan County Sheriff's Department, the Abingdon Police Department, the Washington County, Virginia Sheriff's Department, the Virginia State Police, and the 2nd Judicial District Drug Task Force. The investigation was assisted by the Sullivan County District Attorney's Office, the Washington County Commonwealth Attorney's Office, the City of Bristol Commonwealth Attorney's Office, and the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Tennessee. Assistant United States Attorney Zachary T. Lee of the United States Attorney's Office in Abingdon is prosecuting the case.

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